THE RaRa RAG

Newsletter of The Rochester Amateur Radio Association, Inc.
Founded in 1931

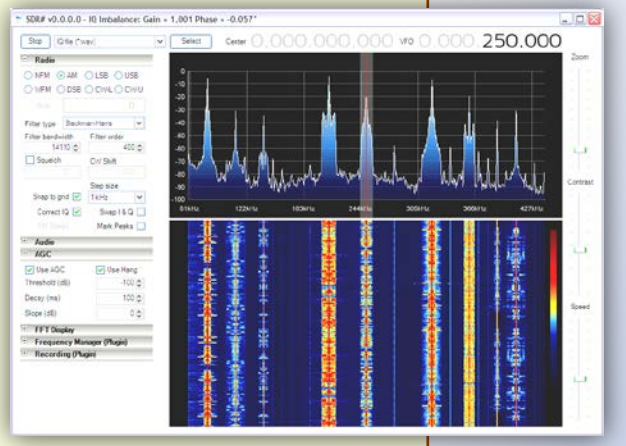
VOL. 65 | April 2013 | NO. 8

Software Defined Radio: The Future is Now

By Gary Skuse, KA1NJL
Vice President, RaRa

Software defined radio (SDR) is all the rage. In its simplest form SDR involves an A-to-D converter that takes analog RF from an antenna and converts to a digital signal that can be manipulated through digital signal processing magic. All of the filtering, signal detection and demodulation of intelligibility takes place in the digital domain. The processing power may consist of a lot of specialized and dedicated circuitry such as that found in a FlexRadio, Elecraft or Perseus system or it can be in your personal computer.

There has been a pervasive movement in recent years to bring SDR to the masses with publically available software that takes advantage of cheap commodity hardware. For example, in the January issue of *QST* there was an article detailing the use of a $20 USB device as a broad spectrum receiver. There are numerous open source software projects available for several operating systems so you can pick your favorite flavor and experiment. Can you say GNU?. Clearly experimentation with SDR does not have to be expensive, and it is a lot of fun.



At the April RARA meeting Freddie Sulyma, WB2GFZ will introduce us to software defined radio and tell us about his experiences working the HF bands using QRP on assorted digital modes. While some of the setup can be confusing, such as using virtual audio cables and virtual serial ports (that's right, no physical cables), our speaker will demystify those connections. Freddie's vast experience with RF and digital circuitry, both professionally and personally, will ensure that your curiosity will be appeased and your questions will be answered.

The April RARA meeting is scheduled for **Friday April 5th at 7:00pm** in the Henrietta Fire Station No. 1 at 3129 East Henrietta Road near the corner of Lehigh Station Road. We hope to see you there as we learn more about this fascinating marriage of radios, computers and good old human ingenuity.

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RARA Meeting
April 5th, 7PM

Henrietta Fire Co. #1
3129 East Henrietta Rd. (15A)

The Prez Sez

By Bill Marinucci, WB2GHC
President, RaRa

I was really disappointed that I could not attend this year's RaRa Winterfest due to a real bad cold with all of its symptoms. However, the feedback was awesome! Comments like "…The food was delicious", "We had a great time", "…Lots of fun", were just a few of the positive remarks that were made after the event. There were new hams, soon-to-be-hams, and Cub Scouts who wanted to learn more about Amateur Radio. A word of thanks to Gary Skuse (a committee of one), as well as Lisa and Frank Schramm who put so much effort in making this event a huge success. Thank you as well to all of the attendees and food contributors.

Speaking of food, we had our 'food contest' again this year, and following are the winners in two categories: Entrees, and Desserts. Entrees: 1st place: Cheeseburger Soup – Jay & Sabrina Hamill; 2nd place: Brown Jambalaya – Trista Hamill; 3rd place (tie): Vege Soup – Len Gessin & Pulled Chicken – Gary Skuse. Desserts: 1st place: Pumpkin Cookies – Bill Luss (New Associate member); 2nd place: Ice Cream Cake – Tina Micari & Frank Fatigate (New members this past summer); 3rd place: Apple Crisp – John Werner. Congratulations to these folks, and thank you for your contributions. Are we going to do this again in 2014? You betcha! This event continues to grow and is another 'perk' for RaRa members.

I am delighted to report that we have three ham radio licenses classes going on currently on Tuesday nights at RIT. I know that for me, this is the largest amount of 'students' that I have had in my General class. The Tech and Extra classes are also very well attended. The enthusiasm of these students makes all the effort in teaching these classes very worthwhile. A special thanks to Bill 'Kasper', WB2SXY, and Roy Wildermuth, W2IT, for stepping up to teach these classes. Your efforts gentlemen, are greatly appreciated.

Looking ahead, our Hamfest, which this year has the title 'Ham-o-Rama 2013' is on June 15th at RIT. Many volunteers are needed to make this another successful Hamfest. Positions include traffic control, parking attendants, ticket sellers, etc. are all available and just waiting for you to fill them. Simply stated, we cannot pull this off without you volunteers! Email me at WB2GHC@arrl.net, or call me at 585-889-9008 if you can find it in your heart to help out. We also will have RaRa meetings during the summer months this year. These meetings will not be the same format that we have during the regular season. Stay tuned for details!

In closing, let me leave you with a thought… In all of my experience in many years of participation in many organizations, I have learned that those who whine and complain the most are the same folks who contribute the very least to the organization. They are the 'snipers' who constantly find fault with others yet won't get off their butts to help out. Hmmm… Fortunately, I have 'circular files' and shredders to deal with such complaints. Now, in addition to these old standbys, I also have a 'Trash' bucket for emails and other electronic messages. That's where these complaints rightly belong.

73 and good hamming!

Calendar of Events

Apr 5 **RaRa General Meeting**
7:00 PM - Henrietta FD #1
3129 E. Henrietta Rd

Apr 10 **RaRa Board of Directors**
5:30 PM, RIT Engineering Hall, Room 2110

Apr 20 **RaRa VE Testing** sessions
10:00 AM, RIT Gleason Hall, Room 3139

Rag-Chew

Editor's Thoughts & Comments
By Kevin Carey, WB2QMY
Editor@RochesterHam.org

Welcome to another edition of the *RARA Rag*! If you're like me, you are waiting to get started on some exciting antenna projects and are also awaiting the start of hamfest season, including our own Ham-o-Rama event at RIT. This year, I am looking forward to attending the event as a true *attendee* for a change, as we have a new and very capable crew at the helm. It promises to be great fun, and I hope to see you there!

Since taking over the editorship of the *RARA Rag* I have used this space to announce happenings in the newsletter, and pass along miscellaneous news items that didn't seem to fit anywhere else. I'll continue to use the space as needed, but with things stabilized at the editor's desk, and with plenty of great content arriving each month, I will begin to use the space optionally. Some months you may not see the *Rag-Chew* column at all. That's not to say I'll become harder to reach if you have a question, comment, or suggestion for an article. My contact info is shown at the back of every *RARA Rag* and I welcome your input.

For now, I'll say 73, and best DX to all readers!

With thanks to the Museum of Hoaxes, here is the best April Fool's Hoax:

The Swiss Spaghetti Harvest

On 1 April 1957, the respected BBC news show Panorama announced that thanks to a very mild winter and the virtual elimination of the dreaded spaghetti weevil, Swiss farmers were enjoying a bumper spaghetti crop. It accompanied this announcement with footage of Swiss peasants pulling strands of spaghetti down from trees. Huge numbers of viewers were taken in. Many called the BBC wanting to know how they could grow their own spaghetti tree. To this the BBC diplomatically replied, "place a sprig of spaghetti in a tin of tomato sauce and hope for the best." **More→**

Silent Keys

John J. Wesline III,
KC2OO
February 26, 2013

Joseph G. Agostinelli,
WB2GHK
February 27, 2013

Jack L. R. Williams,
K2JFV / VE6JW
February 27, 2013

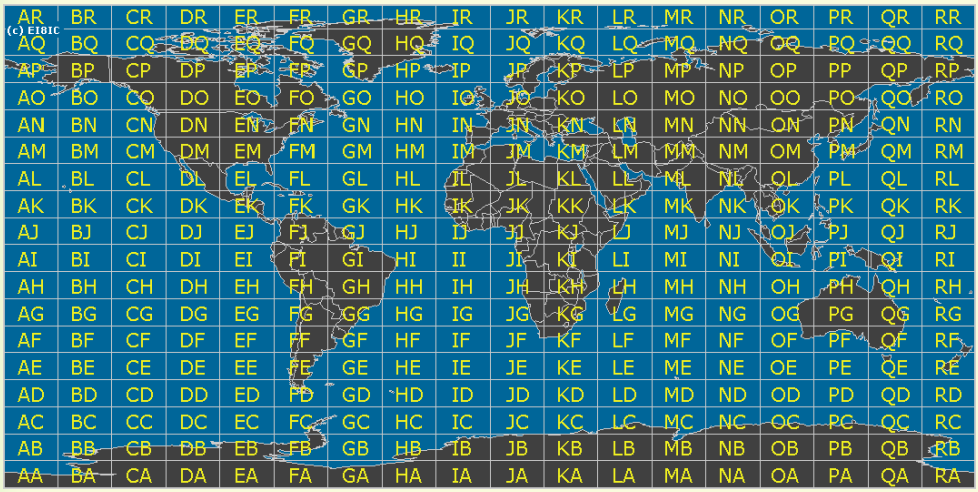
William F. Rapp,
KC2EWP
March 13, 2013

Ham Tech: “Grid Here is FN13CD43”

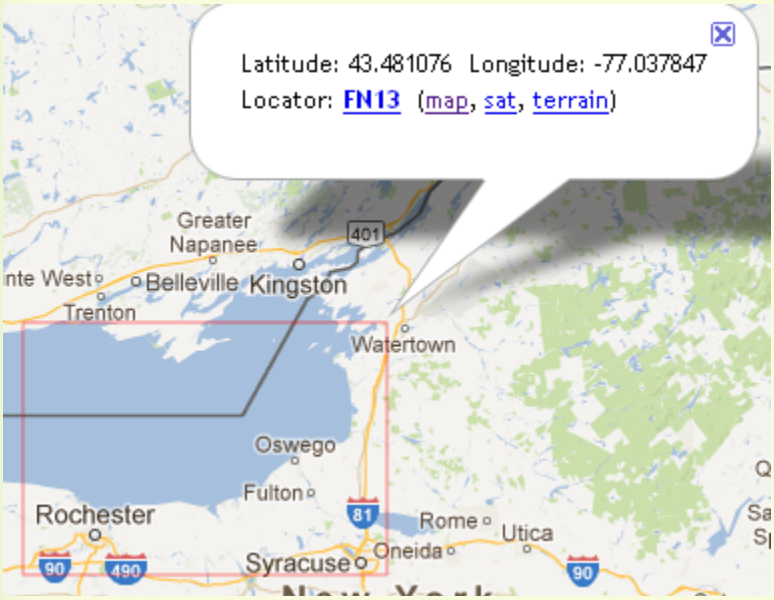
By Duane Fregoe, K2SI

The title of this article has nothing to do with a secret code, although it may seem that way. Many hams will recognize the title as a Maidenhead grid square locator. Grid squares are the typical exchange in a VHF contest. Grid squares are also a popular exchange for 6-meter contacts. The first four characters of the grid square such as FN13 are used in the VHF contests and 6-meter contacts. For hams that have a beam on a rotor the first six characters of the grid square locator such as FN13cd are used for pointing the antenna in the correct direction.

The first two characters (FN) locate one of 324 blocks that the world is divided into (1 degree x 1 degree squares):



The next two characters (13) take the first block and subdivide it into 100 blocks:



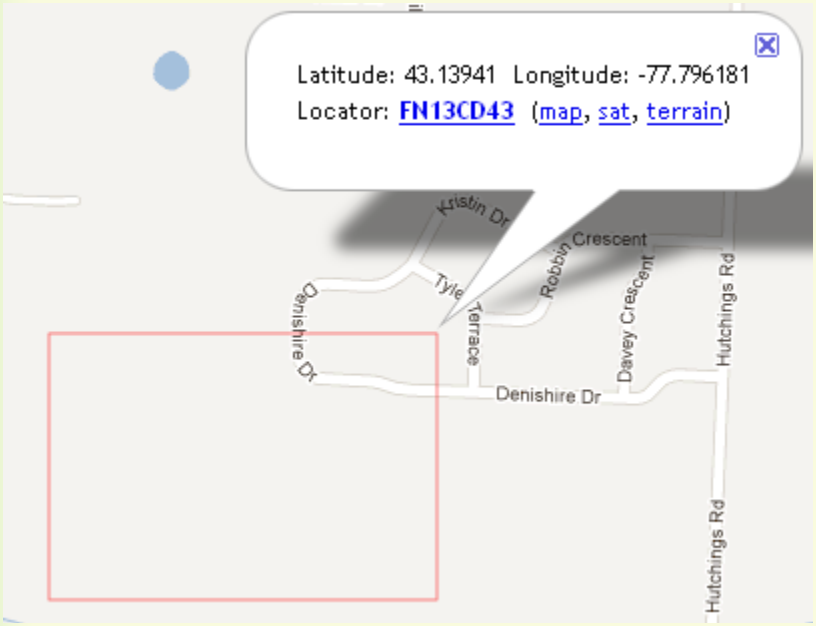
RaRa LOGO Items

Don’t feel left out- get your RaRa logo items today!

(Click here to shop now!)

The next two characters (cd) take the prior block and subdivide it into 576 blocks:

The last two characters (43) take the prior block and subdivide it into 100 blocks:



My QTH in the title is one of a possible 1,866,240,000 blocks. To see how big your eight character block is for your QTH go to http://no.nonsense.ee/qthmap/ . Start by entering your 4 or 6 character grid square to zoom in on the map. Zoom in further until you can see your property and double click on it. It will show you the block and the 8 character designation.

For a more in depth article on the Maidenhead Locator System go to:

WIKIPEDIA
The Free Encyclopedia

Drumlins Amateur Radio Club

The Drumlins Amateur Radio Club's hamfest will be held on April 13th at the Palmyra VFW Post 6778, 4306 Route 31, Palmyra, NY.

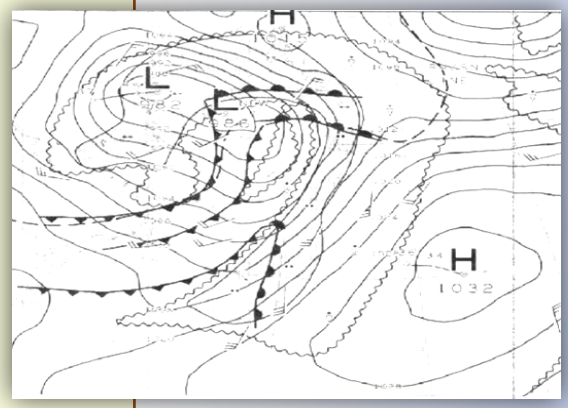
For more information visit:
www.drumlinsarc.org/hamfest.htm

RaRa Rags of the Past

By Ed Gable, K2MP
RaRa Historian

20 Years Ago, April, 1993

VP and program chairman Keith Freeberg, N2BEL, wrote to tell us that the April meeting would feature Dave Schwittek, NW2T, speaking on weather gathering software. Dave will demonstrate WeFax and Multi-Fax programs for those in attendance at the East Henrietta Road venue. On a similar theme, Ed Holdsworth, N2EH, Radio Officer, reported that there be severe weather watch training held in our area. The training, conducted by Gerald English, KB2DVV, Meteorologist at the Rochester WX Bureau, will be held Saturday mornings and is open to any RaRa member. Already, early in the year, there were seven premium public service events listed on the RaRa calendar, including; Tour de Cure, Hamlin Beach Triathlon, Walnut Hill, Ginna Drill, Stuart Horse Trials, etc.



George, AA2FO, reported that five people upgraded at the most recent RaRa testing session. In his President's Corner column, Lloyd Caves, WB2EFU, said that some 45 folks attended, and greatly enjoyed, the just-completed RaRa Winter Funfest. A mild and clear day allowed many outdoor games and much food was consumed. A half page full of pictures showing smiling people confirmed the report. The only Want Ad was an unusual one from Ed, WB2LFS, that read in part "Wanted: Good Woman, must own a kW station, 100 foot tower, needs to cook, log, and do 25 wpm. Send picture of tower …" M. Ornstein, WB2YYB, General Contractor, remained a long term commercial advertiser.

40 Years Ago, April, 1973

This meeting was the annual Old Timer's Night with popular host and Curator of the AWA Museum, Bruce Kelley, W2ICE. This time the program moved from a topic of radio history to an evening of pure historical entertainment. Bruce promised an evening with Clara Bow, Barney Google, Irving Berlin, the Jazz Singer, Benny Goodman, and many others. Announced in this issue was the two-day Rochester Hamfest and VHF Conference to be held May 11 and 12, 1973. In an unusual oversight of the editor, we did not learn where the event was to be held as the author forgot to mention it!

Jim Collinsworth, WB2EDT, Monroe County Radio Officer, had three large articles in this printing. The first being a report on the serious March 17th lake shore flooding in the Greece area that activated numerous radio amateurs and emergency responders. The new 28/88 repeater antennas at Kodak Office got good testing and gave good results. The second article had to do with plans for Hike-for-Hope on May 6th. Plans were for hikers along the route to be able to speak with the Hospital Ship via Gene Fuller, W2FZJ, on HF SSB, while Dave Hallidy, WB2ZEA, plans for 2-way slow scan TV between hikers and the ship. Jim's third article had to do the local 28/88 repeater with the big news being the purchase of the repeater from Charlie Mills, K2LDU. From the Want Ads you could buy a Gladding 25 2M FM radio from Rick Berg WA2RLQ. Tire World, Empire Blvd (WA2SSU) Manager, was a new commercial advertiser.

Clara Gordon Bow
Was an American actress who rose to stardom in silent film during the 1920s. It was her appearance as a plucky shopgirl in the film *It* that brought her global fame and the nickname "The It Girl".

Barney Google
Is a comic strip AKA *Barney Google and Snuffy Smith* created by cartoonist Billy DeBeck that debuted on June 17, 1919 and is still running today.

Wikipedia

News from our friends at other area clubs…

Monroe County ARES / RACES News

By Jim DiTucci, N2IXD

The Monroe County Amateur Radio Emergency Service, Inc. holds its meetings on the fourth Thursday of each month. Anyone interested, members and non-members, are welcome to attend. The next ARES Meeting will be held on: **Thursday, April 25, 2013, at 7:00 PM.**

Meetings are held at the **Greater Rochester Chapter of the American Red Cross HQ, 50 Prince Street, Rochester, NY 14607.** (Located behind the Rochester Auditorium Theatre, 885 Main St. E.)

ARES NET: Monroe County ARES/RACES meets on the air every Thursday of the month at 9:00 pm, on the 146.61 MHz (-) 110.9 Hz PL repeater. The only exception to that are nights when we hold our regular meeting, generally on the 4th Thursday of the month.

WEB: www.monroecountyemcomm.org

NBEMS: Want to learn about Narrow Band Emergency Messaging System (NBEMS)? It's the latest and easiest way to "Go Digital!" Bring your laptop computer and 2-M handheld transceiver. We will conduct an NBEMS clinic after every meeting through June 2013.

RRRA News

By Bob Shewell, N2HJD

We hope everyone enjoyed RRRA's March auction. Again thanks to Ed Gable, K2MP and Dick Goslee, KG2I for entertaining us and being RRRA's annual auctioneers.

April's meeting is going to be geared towards Newbies and people learning how to be Hams. RRRA recently revitalized the Ray Pickens and Leon Ingrick Jr. Memorial Newbie net. The net time is 4 P.M. Sundays on a RRRA repeater and is open to all Hams. Our goal is to interest new Hams in the hobby and assist them with questions they may have. Our hope is that some of these hams will take an interest in using amateur repeaters and join RRRA to help support the many repeaters it brings to the amateur community. I will bring some electronic components to the meeting for show and tell. The show and tell plus discussion is open to *all* hams so please attend. Who knows, you might decide to Elmer a Newbie and Newbies will get to put a face to a voice.

The April meeting will be on the third Friday, which is April 19, 2013 at 7:30 PM. The location will be at the Pittsford Town Hall basement which is close to the intersection of Routes 96 and 31. There is a public parking lot located behind the Town Hall.

Editor's Note:

Free press is available for your club! We welcome brief updates and meeting notices from all area ham clubs. Just send your input to editor@rochesterham.org. When preparing your article, please remember to keep it short, and assume that readers know nothing about your club. The article should be focused toward non-members, and not your own current members… that's what your newsletter is for! We hope all area clubs will take advantage of this opportunity to interest new members in joining their ranks.

73, –Kevin

The American Legion Amateur Radio Club (TALARC)

Submitted by Jim Shaw, KD2BBJ

The American Legion has formed a special entity to provide a forum for military veterans who today are engaged in a hobby that can also provide emergency communications "when all else fails." During the May 2011 Spring Meetings, the National Executive Committee authorized the establishment of The American Legion Amateur Radio Club (TALARC).

There are estimated to be 700,000 federally licensed amateur radio operators, or "hams," in the United States. Over the years, countless members of the U.S. military were trained as technicians or engineers, and later obtained amateur-radio licenses to continue to use their abilities at home, as both recreation and a public-service commitment.

"The beauty of amateur radio is that it attracts folks of all career interests, from doctors, PhDs, engineers, rocket scientists to mechanics, housewives, construction and office workers, students and everything in between," says Robert L. Morrill, chairman of the Legion's Public Relations Commission. "Hams provide backup communications to emergency-management agency offices across the country when 'all else fails,' and have done so with distinction in virtually every major disaster when cell towers and commercial communications have been knocked out after earthquakes, hurricanes, tornadoes, and man-made disasters."

The club has established an amateur radio station at National Headquarters with the call sign K9TAL (K9 The American Legion) in order to conduct special-event operations on The American Legion Birthday, Veterans Day, etc.; operate SKYWARN during local severe weather; and provide members an opportunity to operate the station during visits to National Headquarters. A special QSL card is provided to all amateur radio stations that work K9TAL on the air.

In January 2005, the Legion signed an agreement with the Department of Homeland Security to support emergency disaster preparedness. Subsequently, the Disaster Preparedness Booklet was made available to posts. Amateur-radio support was an integral entity.

"The potential to serve here is limitless," Morrill says. "Legionnaires who are hams can help others get licensed, coordinate with local emergency authorities, provide counseling and assistance to schools, and a whole array of other support.

"While some people may think that ham radio is an old technology, the simple truth is that hams were working with digital transmissions long before folks had home computers, and they provided the impetus to make 'wireless' happen. They were transmitting emergency calls from their cars long before anyone had a mobile phone to do the same. Today, hams are conducting broad-spectrum experiments on ham bands that may eventually become routine ways to communicate for all of us."

Membership is free to members of The American Legion family. For information, or to join, please send e-mail to: k9tal@legion.org

Binghamton Amateur Radio Association

The Binghamton Amateur Radio Association Hamfest will be held on Sunday April 14th at the Broome Community College Ice Center.

See **www.w2ow.org for** more information.

The Amateur's Code

Originally written by Paul M. Segal, W9EEA (1928)

The Radio Amateur is:

CONSIDERATE Never knowingly operating in such a way as to lessen the pleasure of others.

LOYAL Offering loyalty, encouragement and support to other amateurs, local clubs and the American Radio Relay League, through which Amateur Radio in the United States is represented nationally and internationally.

PROGRESSIVE With knowledge abreast of science, a well built and efficient station and operation beyond reproach.

FRIENDLY With slow and patient operation when requested, friendly advice and counsel to the beginner, kindly assistance, co-operation and consideration for the interests of others. These are the hallmarks of the amateur spirit.

BALANCED Radio is an avocation, never interfering with duties owed to family, job, school or community.

PATRIOTIC With station and skill always ready for service to country and community

Visit the RARA Website!

Did you know that your club's website (www.rochesterham.org) offers these features and more?

- ✓ Photos of meetings & events (you might be in there!)
- ✓ Info on upcoming meetings/programs
- ✓ Rochester Hamfest information!
- ✓ Online membership & renewal
- ✓ Track and redeem your Reward points
- ✓ Public service info & sign-up
- ✓ VE testing info
- ✓ Back issues of the *Rag* in PDF
- ✓ Officer contact info
- ✓ List of past presidents (how many do you remember?)
- ✓ Online membership directory
- ✓ Order RARA logo products (hats, shirts, and mugs)
- ✓ Useful Internet links
- ✓ Ham Radio 101—tons of tutorial info, plus net & repeater listings

THE RARA MARKET PLACE

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..... Sabrina Hamill, WD2STK
Club Historian ..... Ed Gable, K2MP
Club Station Trustee ..... Jim DiTucci, N2IXD
Education Coordinator ..... Sue Waterstraat, KC2SUE
Hamfest Producer .....
Public Service Coordinator ..... Joe Walker, KA8WJH
License Testing Coordinator ..... Ken Hall, W2KRH
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RaRa RAG Layout Editor ..... Frank Schramm, WB2PYD
Refreshments Coordinator ..... Tom Austin, KA2GXX
Webmaster ..... Frank Schramm, WB2PYD

RaRa meets on the first Friday of each month from September through May at 7pm. come join us at:

Henrietta Fire Company No.1
3129 East Henrietta Rd.
Henrietta, NY 14467

Get Directions

Rochester Area Radio Club Contacts

Antique Wireless Association (AWA)
Lynn Bisha, W2BSN ..... lbisha@rochester.rr.com

Drumlins Amateur Radio Club Ltd. (DARC)
Glen Bruemmer, KC2YGH ..... kc2ygh@yahoo.com

Fisherman's Net Amateur Radio Club
Jim Sutton, N2OPS ..... jim@otrym.org

Genesee Valley Amateur Radio Assn
Bill Boyd, N3DSP ..... N3DSP@lafireline.net

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Jim DiTucci, N2IXD ..... n2ixd@arrl.net

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Rochester Radio Repeater Association (RRRA)
Brad Allen, KB2CHY ..... kb2chy@frontiernet.net

Rochester VHF Group (RVHFG)
John Stevens, WB2BYP ..... wb2byp@arrl.net

Squaw Island Amateur Radio Club (SIARC)
Steve Benton, WB2VMR ..... sbenton2@rochester.rr.com

XEROX Amateur Radio Club (XARC)
Ned Asam, W2NED ..... w2ned@frontiernet.net

May Rag Deadline
April 15, 2013